

W r e s t l i n g

P e r s p e c t i v e

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Is Hulk Hogan WCW's Savior?

By - Michael McGowen

Hulk Hogan in WCW? Who would have ever thought it was possible? Then again, the same was said three years ago when Ric Flair joined the WWF. But, contrary to what WCW would have you believe, this isn't that big an orchestration. Until two or three years ago, this would have been earth-shattering news. But now who really cares? How many of you are truly excited about Hogan stepping into a WCW ring? I know I'm not, and Hogan's arrival at the last *Clash of the Champions* did little to change my mind. However, I must admit a terrible curiosity in seeing this scenario unfold.

Hogan's presence in WCW begs many questions. The obvious one has already been answered: WCW couldn't wait to crown him champion. How long will Hogan be champion? That is difficult to say, but I'll wager at least the rest of this year. How many jobs will he do, if any, and for whom? Well, probably very few and probably only for Flair. Can you envision Hogan losing to anyone else in the promotion? He must have been granted considerable control over his use by WCW, as he is the number one babyface. After all, Hogan has his Hollywood "hero" image to look after; as if Hollywood really cares.

The one truly intriguing question to be answered is how will Hogan adjust to life in WCW with its more physical style of wrestling or have special concessions been made for him? Can he wrestle in such a fashion after working in the WWF for so many years or will he? Can you imagine Hogan defending the title against WCW's walking insurance liability, Vader? How would Hogan react the first time Vader nails him with one of his patented stiff shots? Would he take it like a true professional and dish it out, or will he run crying foul to Ted Turner? This may yet become interesting.

WCW's treatment of Hogan signing with them tries to convince you that the Messiah has come to call. Yet the brass probably believes that to be true. They have bet the farm that Hogan will lead them into the promised land. But is he the long sought after answer? Can he alone be the solution that will put WCW at the top? I doubt it.

Hogan's addition to WCW has garnered the mainstream attention WCW has long lacked, but that's from entertainment people and journalists whose knowledge of pro wrestling wouldn't fill a thimble. Most of them are shrugging their shoulders and paying little attention since the fad of Hulk Hogan and wrestling has long since past by. The true gauge is the wrestling fans, and judging from the TV ratings, they seem to care less than ever. Meanwhile, aren't the loyal WCW fans turned on? Didn't they give Hogan such a "warm" welcome at the most recent *Clash of the Champions*. The post production crew will be burning the midnight oil working on the soundtrack for tapings. It all seems destined to being as smashing a success as Hogan's last WWF run.

Speaking of smashing successes, wasn't the Hogan contract signing at the Disney/MGM Studios just that? It came off so phony and so staged that I couldn't contain myself from laughing right out of my chair. What about those "members of the press" and their inane questions? Did that have WCW written all over it or what? Doesn't Eric Bischoff realize that those "reporters" should have at least somewhat resembled journalists out to ask important questions instead of tourists who had nothing better to do? Bobby Heenan and Gene Okerlund seem like hard-hitting investigative journalists by comparison. Then there are all the pro-Hogan signs that look like they're made up by the Public Relations department rather than fans.

We'll see how long this latest version of WCW's life raft, named the S.S. Hogan, will float. By all indications, this one is already springing leaks everywhere. Hogan is either going to finally get WCW into port, or be the albatross that finally sinks them. My bet is on the bird.

Sidelines

Thanks To Mike Lano, Jeff Mullins, Evan Ginzburg, and Georgiann Makropoulus for the plugs. They are appreciated, as always.

Next Issue Will Be A Special Double Issue • A Wrestling Perspective summer tradition will continue this year as Issue #46 will be a double issue featuring part 2 of our Dory Funk interview. If you have a 1 on your subscription label, you will need to send an additional \$1.50 to receive issue #46. If you have a number other than 1 on your label, you will receive issue #46 and will find your subscription reduced by one issue next month.

Coming Up In Wrestling Perspective Missy Hyatt will return to discuss her EEOC complaint against World Championship Wrestling. Smoky Mountain Wrestling General Manager Sandy Scott discusses his career and working with and life in SMW. Author, painter and former pro wrestler Ted Lewin talks about his career and tells some wonderful stories in the process. That's just some of the interviews scheduled for the next few months. Of course there's more as the writing of our brilliant columnists, Bill "Potshot" Kunkel, Mike McGowen, and wrestling's foremost historian, The Phantom of the Ring are enough to keep you running back for more. Don't miss out, if you're subscription expires with this issue, renew today!

Interviews, Interviews & More Interviews • If you enjoy the Dory Funk Jr. Interviews this month, you are bound to enjoy *Wrestling Perspective: The Interviews*, a 60 page collection of interviews with Billy Graham, Stan

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In Perspective: Dory Funk Jr.

In many sports, the word legend is overused, but there's no doubt Dory Funk Jr. is one in the world of professional wrestling. Coming from the famous Funk family, Dory hit the highlight of his career when he captured the world title from Gene Kiniski on Feb. 11, 1969 and held on to that title for about four years. In this rare interview conducted by David Skolnick on June 17, 1994, Funk talks about how he broke into wrestling, his career and the current state of the business. Funk, who has wrestled in Japan for 25 years, also discussed the state of the business in that country and his current job as a talent scout for All Japan Pro Wrestling.

Wrestling Perspective: Obviously your father had a significant influence on you getting involved in wrestling. Why don't you tell me how you got started?
Dory Funk Jr.: My father was the superintendent of a place called the Texas Boys Camp. Part of the program was wrestling. I started when I was about seven. That continued through high school and I watched him wrestle all the time. I wrestled in high school and played football in high school in Texas. I went to Canyon High School. From there, I went to West Texas State, which is in Canyon also. I played college football. We went to the Sun Bowl in 1963. I played end, offensive and defensive end. We didn't switch back then. I had a very successful college football career. Also, in those days, you couldn't be a pro in one sport and an amateur in another. We played our last game and I had an offer from the local promoter, Doc Sarpola, to go into wrestling. I was living on \$40 a month for housing and \$10 for laundry. I had a wife and two children to raise.

My first wrestling match, I went into the ring and made \$140 that night and thought that was great. I kept going. This was 1963. Actually, my first half year in the wrestling business, I was wrestling at night and going to college in the daytime. I got a degree that summer.

WP: Would I recognize anyone you played football with?

DF: Dwayne Thomas was there the year after me. A kid named Jerry Logan, who played for the Atlanta Falcons. A kid named Jerry Pedro. You might recognize the teams we played, Texas Tech, Texas.

WP: West Texas has had several famous wrestlers who played football.

DF: Yes, none of the boys came up with me went into wrestling. Shortly after me, there were a lot of them. Tully Blanchard, Bruiser Brody, Tito Santana. They all came after I finished up. I think it might have been my influence and my father's influence that got them involved.

WP: You started wrestling as a single.

DF: At the beginning, I wrestled as a single. I had some very good opponents and got some very good experience. In my first year, I wrestled Pat O'Connor, Sonny Myers. I wrestled Lou Thesz for the championship, Gene Kiniski.

WP: Your father trained you, but being in the ring was probably the best education anyone could get.

DF: That was the best education I could get. I think I was in the wrestling business three months when I got to wrestle Verne Gagne. Later I wrestled

Gene Kiniski. A lot of long matches.

WP: You needed a different type of conditioning back then than what you see now.

DF: I think for sure. You see very few 60-minute matches. Back then, there were many times when you'd go to many towns with only six wrestlers. I'd wrestle one match and my tag partner would wrestle one match. In fact, my partner wrestled a warm-up match, one fall, 15 minutes, and I'd wrestle a warm-up match for 45 minutes and we'd come back and wrestle a tag team match for one hour. That was it. I mean that was the card.

WP: You had to stretch it out for people to get their money's worth.

DF: (laughs) Yeah. People want to see hard work. You really work hard back then.

WP: Were you smart to the business when you broke in?

DF: I don't know if I'm smart to the business yet (laughs).

WP: You wrestled in and out of several territories.

DF: Basically, my career began in Vancouver. Gene Kiniski, Don Leo Jonathan. I spent about three months there and came back home. Several things had a big influence on me. I went to Australia to work for Jim Barnett in '66. Also, it's kind of generally known if you're going to make it in professional wrestling, you have to make it in St. Louis. Sam Muchnick was the promoter. He really had good wrestling. I would say having the chance to wrestle there really helped me.

WP: At one time, you tagged with your father.

DF: I tagged with my father in St. Louis and Amarillo and lots of places. The first ever sellout in Greensville Coliseum was a six-man tag with my father, my brother and myself against I want to say, I'm sure it was Johnny Weaver. It was the first sellout in the Coliseum.

WP: When did Terry break-in?

DF: I think a couple of years, 1965. He played two years of football at junior college. He played with more famous names, Mercury Morris. I think Terry has done his best to do things differently. The two of us have very different styles.

WP: Completely different. Would it work as well if he wasn't your brother?

DF: No, I wouldn't walk in the ring with him. He's crazy. I just happen to love Terry. You never know what to expect when you're in the ring with Terry. That's part of his attraction.

WP: Are you surprised that he's more popular now than he was 15 years ago?

DF: Ahh, no, knowing him it doesn't surprise me.

WP: Why is that?

DF: A tremendous desire to compete in whatever he does. He's had to fight hard to begin with. Athletics in high school, not many people know he weighed 155 pounds when he came out of high school. When he went on to play college ball, he wanted to do it bad enough, he trained. He went to junior college first. When he left home, he weighed 155, 160 pounds and he came back at 240 pounds. He became a great ballplayer. That opportunity wasn't there when he came out of high school.

He had to work for it.

WP: Why don't we talk about the title match with Gene Kiniski? You had title shots before that.

DF: It was a concentrated effort. My father sat down and talked to both of us and said one of us could become world champion. When you're picking a direction, you got to pick one way to go. Between myself, Terry and my father, we decided the three of together to take Junior and train him and make him great and we did. We picked a direction and we went after it. During the early part of my career, my father was my teacher, business manager, adviser, trainer, everything. He told me what to do and when I made a mistake, I sure heard about it. If I did a great job, I didn't hear anything (laughs). It was a family effort. Very fortunately I got the belt from Gene Kiniski in St. Louis, February 11, 1969 and I had a four and a half year run that was incredible. It took me (laughs) everywhere in the world. It was an unbelievable run.

WP: I guess your life changed from that day.

DF: My life is always changing. Oh, definitely. Those were the days when there were 22 different places to work in the United States and several places around the world. Very shortly I became very in demand. Traveling like crazy. I wrestled every place in the United States, Japan, everywhere. A very tough schedule. It was very hard on the family. But at the same time, the money was excellent and the treatment you got was the best.

WP: Since your title reign no one else has held it as long.

DF: No, no one.

WP: Are the days of champions holding belts for a long time over?

DF: It would take an exceptional person to come along that could do everything a champion should do. I can't speak for anybody else, but every time during that four-and-a-half years it was a thrill to put on my boots and go to the ring. There was no boredom. I was wrestling a different person in a different area every night. I was wrestling the top challengers in 22 different territories. The local champion and the second-rated guy and the third-rated guy. When I came around again, it was somebody else or the fella I wrestled the time before. In the case of Jack Brisco, I wrestled him probably 100 times (laughs) in a year.

WP: I'd like to talk about Brisco. The matches with him are legendary and no one's come close to that except maybe Flair-Steamboat in '89. How would you compare your matches with Jack to Flair-Steamboat?

DF: Well, there were many more. Flair-Steamboat, they were the big attraction that year. They were great wrestling matches. You can't take anything away from them. Brisco and myself were more on-the-mat wrestling. Brisco was out of Oklahoma State. Neither one of us knew what it was like to climb up onto the second rope (laughs). I'm really not comfortable up there and I don't know what in the world I'd do up on the second or third rope.

WP: Do you think the matches with Brisco could keep the interest of fans today?

DF: I'm going to run this by you. I think it would have much more interest now.

WP: Is that because they don't have it

now?

DF: No, there's several things about wrestling that I think it might be...I don't know if they're missing the boat today because in some cases, they're doing very well. But I think that wrestling must be sold as a contest. If wrestling is sold as entertainment, I'm not sure we can compete against Hollywood in that way. When you say wrestling on the mat, golf is not an action sport. It's just watch that ball go in the hole. But it is built around who's going to win, a contest. There's no action. Nobody's going to get bloodied up, nobody's going to get bashed or anything. But there's a chance that the guy they like might win. You know what I mean? Baseball is not really considered a real wild action sport. But when you get down to who's going to win the World Series, you can't keep people out of the ballpark. In Japan, sumo, you've watched sumo? That's not a real action sport either. They get \$1,500 a seat. They're sold out three, four, five months in advance because they're selling to those people a contest. I think that's what people like to see. They also like to see hard work. That's one thing about Ric Flair, he does give people hard work. Probably harder than most people in this country right now. When people go to the matches, they want to see their money's worth or more than their money's worth or they're not going to come back.

WP: Were you and Jack trying to accomplish something in particular during your matches?

DF: We were in the case of selling ourselves to the people. It was the match that the people asked for. We weren't in that difficult of a situation. Jack had a very good two, three years in Florida with a very good promotion behind

him with Eddie Graham, Florida Championship Wrestling. These people in Florida were totally behind Jack Brisco. I came out of the state of Texas. I didn't have to do anything to be a heel, to be a bad guy. It was an outsider coming in against their hero and the match made itself.

WP: To take it 180 degrees around, how was working with Dusty Rhodes? While not a great worker like Jack, he was a brilliant performer.

DF: They definitely had their place. Again in Florida, Dusty won the world's championship and left Florida for a period of time when he won the belt. He was gone for like two, three weeks which left me in his home area with Dusty gone. I took over what the wrestling fans thought was his home ground. So when Dusty came back, we did capacity business. Dusty is really a very charismatic character and in the right place at the right time, he's a great guy.

WP: But there was a wrong place and a wrong time.

DF: (laughs) I'm just listening to you. It wasn't me who said that (laughs).

WP: You dropped the belt to Harley Race? What type of opponent was he?

DF: What you see is what you get. He growls. He's a great wrestler.

WP: Like Ole Anderson?

DF: I don't know Ole that well. On very few occasions have I come across Ole.

WP: What were your feelings when you lost?

DF: I felt like I was cheated (laughs). I had his shoulders down for more than a three-count and there was no one

there to count. Shortly thereafter, he got a three-count on me. So Harley Race was champion, and I would liked to have had a rematch with him, for six weeks. Jack Brisco won the belt from him and for a good period of time, Brisco was champion, but he wasn't the fellow that beat me. It also made for good returns wrestling him. I turned right around and started wrestling Jack Brisco some more.

WP: Jack lost it to Terry.

DF: Terry won the belt from Brisco.

WP: And that was your match.

DF: Yes, it was. You are right. I was scheduled to wrestle Brisco. You are right on.

WP: Title aspirations went along the wayside with Terry as champion.

DF: I was as proud of Terry as could be. I thought it was great that he was champion. He was a great champion too. He was champion for a year and did fabulous business. He broke many records that I held in attendance. Incidentally, Terry drew a lot of money against many different wrestlers but I know a lot of money with Dusty Rhodes in Florida. I'm sure a lot of people would love to see Dusty Rhodes and Terry Funk in the ring.

WP: It looks like it's going to happen.

DF: (laughs) Yes.

WP: When you won the belt, was that the first time you went to Japan?

DF: The first time I went to Japan I won the belt in February of '69 and I went over to Japan in I believe December of '69.

WP: What were your impressions?

DF: A very quiet country at that time.

Very serious wrestling fans. In those days, everybody who came to the matches came in ties. The matches started at 6, 6:30, when business people got off work and it was very, very quiet. What few people know is that even though it was very quiet, you could hear a pin drop and it made very many American wrestlers very nervous. They could talk to each other on opposite sides of the arena during the matches. But those people in those days watched every move. They didn't miss anything. Even though the crowd reaction and noise was completely gone, they were extremely interested in what took place and not many people realized that.

WP: Did you start with All Japan or was it even around at the time?

DF: I worked for another company, what they called Japan Pro Wrestling company back in those days. Inoki and Baba were the two stars. I believe Baba was individually contracted to work a television station and Inoki to another. So even though it was one company, it was pretty stiff competition between the two.

WP: I know you worked with Baba dozens of times, but what about Inoki?

DF: Yeah, when Terry and I wrestled Baba and Inoki in tag team matches quite a few times. I wrestled the famous single match in Japan with Baba near the hour time limit. I wrestled two one-hour time limit matches with Inoki.

WP: Baba is not known as a great wrestler, a great worker.

DF: I'd have to say he is a great wrestler. The latest time when he demonstrated it was when Teddy DiBiase got hurt over in Japan and he stepped in and took his place and put his career and his

company on the line and I think it was one of the candidates for match for the year. I think Misawa beat Baba. He put his career on the line.

WP: You've been in the ring with him many times and you think he's a solid worker.

DF: No, I think he's excellent.

WP: And Inoki?

DF: Excellent. He's a great athlete and a great worker.

WP: What is it about both of them that makes them icons in Japan?

DF: They were the best. In Japan there was Rikidozan and there was one company. These two fellows were the next ones to come along. They were head and shoulders above everyone else. There were two of them and they worked for one company and that one company got into financial difficulties and actually I was supposed to wrestle Inoki in a return match over there for one hour time limit. The night I was supposed to wrestle Inoki, he left the company and opened his own company and I wrestled Seiji Sakaguchi. He wound up being president of New Japan and Inoki rather than face me in the ring left to form his own company.

WP: That was the reason.

DF: (laughs) For sure.

WP: You've been in there with a lot of Japanese legends and U.S. wrestlers who are considered legendary over there, Stan Hansen, Bruiser Brody, Jimmy Snuka. You were in Terry's match.

WP: Terry and myself against Hansen and Terry Gordy. It was 1983. It was quite a thrill. It was quite a night.

WP: Why was he getting out at that

time? Did he have enough?

DF: I can't answer for Terry, but I can say we all change our minds. At the time, his intention was to retire. A lot of people in other sports change their minds.

WP: Has that affected his drawing power over there or do you look at the FMW matches he's had with Onita as proof otherwise?

DF: I think his drawing power is tremendous. He had a lot to do with those two big shows for Onita.

WP: Do you ever see yourself getting involved in an explosive match?

DF: I will maintain a career doing what I do which is wrestling. If the right offer was made, I'd do anything. Any kind of match. It's the matter of what are they going to pay you versus the risk you take. If you'd ask, "Would I do it?" I certainly would. Generally, I don't do that kind of thing. There's been a lot of interest in the Philadelphia match coming up (the recent brawl with Public Enemy) with Terry and myself. As you know, it's been quite some time since we've teamed up and whether our styles are different or not, this is a case of the people actually coming to the promoter and saying we want to see those two guys together.

WP: You'll also be wrestling as a tag for Cornette's promotion.

DF: Yes, Smoky Mountain.

WP: It's been some time since you two tagged.

DF: In the case of these two matches, the public wanted to see them. I know Philly's going to do well and I expect Smoky Mountain to do well.

WP: Jumping back to All Japan. Your

current affiliation is what? Kind of an American talent agent?

DF: You could call it a talent agent. I work for All Japan. Generally, whenever I feel like I'm needed. Many times, it's contacting wrestlers, checking the problem areas.

WP: You were instrumental in getting the Heavenly Bodies work over there. Who else?

DF: Actually, quite a few people, but I would really rather stay on my wrestling career. A lot of people think it's personal. A lot of people are going to feel slighted. You really feel good if someone comes over and asks you rather than you contact them.

WP: What do you look for?

DF: Hard work, hard work. Guys that are willing to work hard matches. All Japan's business is built on great wrestling.

WP: Very stiff work.

DF: Very hard work. You call it stiff work, but I call it hard work. Lots of action and what people pay to see is who's going to win the match and they get that.

WP: Most experts would agree they've got the best wrestlers in the world, Misawa, Kawada, Kobashi.

DF: Yes, I think they have absolutely great wrestlers. On the American side, Hansen is great. Steve Williams is great. Steve, his work is based on hard, dangerous work. Not going into the ring and taking things lightly. Johnny Ace is doing a great job over there and has for a long time. Maybe even coming on stronger even know. Kobashi, Kawada and Misawa. They've got a whole host of others. They take their kids and they start training them between 18 and 20. Jun Akiyama is a great kid. Kikuchi is great, very popular.

Most of these young guys when they come to All Japan, I usually train them. They usually spend two years before they break before (laughs) the first or second match, at least that.

WP: Can a system like that work in this country or they just aren't enough good workers?

DF: I think it would work well. There's not enough interest in two years down the road, much less three or four or five or six. Everybody's looking at where they're going to go next. People need to look at what your business is going to be like in 10 years. The business in Japan is built on the Japanese way of doing business.

WP: It could succeed in this country?

DF: Yeah, a system of doing it that way would succeed. They've got to be trained to work hard and do long matches. I think that would work over here.

Potshots From Around The World - By Bill "Potshot" Kunkel

To Missy, With Love

Editors' Note: After reading the Missy Hyatt interview that appeared in issues #42, 43 & 44 of Wrestling Perspective, Bill "Potshot" Kunkel could no longer contain his emotions and submitted the following "open letter."

Dear Missy:

Okay, I'll admit it: it took me a while to become attuned to your special vibe.

First, there was that calendar. Now I don't know who took those pictures, but as someone who earned a few bucks

in his misspent youth taking photos of scantily clad females (don't you love that phrase? "Scantily clad?") It gives me chills.), I was astounded. Lest I start getting into detail, suffice it to say that the entire point of glamour shots is to play up a subject's assets (you have several), and downplay any physical weaknesses (you have a few). The photographer totally missed the point.

Missy, anytime you would like someone to shoot a spread for you that will make you look so hot you'll sizzle,

give me a call. I'll fly Mike Lano in and we'll shoot you so hot you'll want to smoke when we're finished, okay? Plus, while I haven't taken pictures on a professional basis in quite a few years, I have at least heard of optical scanners and PhotoShop software. I have also met Turner's top technoweenie, and he could have made those photos sizzle.

But that stuff about Gino Hernandez, that blew my doors off, Missy. I haven't met many women wild enough to admit that the only thing they regret in life is

having failed to come on to a dead wrestler. Then there was that stuff about "Louis Vitron luggage." "I invented that," you say, a paragraph or two after admitting that Gino Hernandez had the first set you ever saw. It's sort of like my a dear friend of mine named Racheal Bertrand, who once told me: "I had this great idea. Well, it wasn't entirely my idea - someone else thought of it." Then there was that Hawk stuff with the black rose and the whole subtext that made me go back and watch that match from *Starrcade* as it was suddenly fascinating. I almost went into fibrillation when you said you'd have Hawk's pups, but wouldn't have had kids with Hot Stuff. "I mean I married him, but..." What a

card!

Still, as the issues kept coming, I was more and more impressed. You may be a little spaced, but jeez, you had more good ideas per page than any other interview subject I've read in this business since the last Jim Cornette interview, and your ideas had wider scope.

WCW was nuts - that is, certi-bleeping-fiable - to have nixed your *Playboy* shoot. That would have been priceless publicity, and yet the reason they said no; Disney might get offended.

Disney!?!

Who cares about Disney? So WCW is shooting a couple of matches at their park, so what? It isn't like TBS doesn't have its own studio. The fact is, you probably put more butts in the seats than any performer in the company, including Sting, okay? You also inspired more PPV buy-ins.

You're also dead-on about the union issues. I know people will never take you seriously - especially when you're so uninhibited and so unwilling to play games - but wrestling may have let a legitimately great mind get away.

I mean that

Blowing My Horn

I don't do this much; but do you folks know who you're reading here? I mean do you really know?

Forget wrestling; you know my wrestling creed. But I've done some pretty cool stuff in the real world. With my partner of two-plus decades, Arnie Katz, we were the first people in the world to write about electronic games on a regular basis with the "Arcade Alley" column that ran from 1978 to 1983 in *Video* magazine. In 1981, we created the first magazine devoted to the subject, *Electronic Games* magazine, which was the most popular and successful magazine in the field until my partners and I left in December 1984 to form Katz-Kunkel-Worley, Inc., a consulting firm.

KKW has worked for virtually every

major player in the field, holding retainers over the years with dozens of publishers and developers. I have also testified as the sole expert witness for the defense in three landmark video game court cases: Atari vs. Magnavox, 1981, which we lost; Nintendo vs. Galoob's Game Genie in 1990, which we won; and over the past 12 months I was able to help Data East defeat Street Fighter Colossus Capcom when the latter tried to get an injunction against Data East's game *Fighter's History*.

As a designer - all of our stuff is credited to Subway Software - I have worked on about 35-40 game designs, including major input on Borrowed Time (Activision, 1985), Star Trek: First Contact (Simon & Schuster Electronic Publishing, 1986), Superman: Man of Steel (Capstone, 1989), The Omnicron

Conspiracy (Epyx, 1986), Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus Games (several publishers - we made a lot on this one, mostly in England), First Person Pinball (several different publishers), the only WWF computer game (Microleague WWF Wrestling) in numerous editions with many "Match Disks," Batman Returns (Konami, 1993), Mad Dog McCree II (American Laser Games, 1994), Blood Bowl (LSA, 1994) and a few others.

We still edit a magazine called *Electronic Games* but it's a new publication with a new publisher. We're the only all-platform book - which is, we cover everything from PC CD-ROM games to Game Gear software. We also do hard hitting analysis and news pieces. The magazine is very successful.

I have a piece of everything we do. KKW just signed a major book publishing and consulting deal with Prima Press and I just finished a book for them on electronic baseball and one on strategy for a hot new video game called *Spiderman & Venom: Maximum Carnage* (Acclaim). Oh yes, I used to write comics. I wrote for DC through the Seventies, Marvel in '77 - '78, and wrote about 100 *Richie Rich* stories for Harvey, before quitting to become executive editor of the original *Electronic Games*.

What I'm saying is: I'm a real writer. I'm a professional. I make money - very serious money - doing this. This isn't just to beat my own drum or run some kind of heel riff or anything. I just want to establish that when I criticize stuff in this business or the sheets, it isn't from any personal bias; it's because I have trained myself over the years to be analytical. I make my living providing analysis, and it's something you can't just turn on and off. When I see something clearly being done wrong, I'm not saying it from the perspective of a WCW rooter or a Titan mark; it's from the perspective of a real live media analyst.

One of the things that's driving me nuts, beyond the fact that *Talk Soup* is now showing clips from *The Larry Sanders Show*, is this bizarre back to 1984 trip being perpetrated by WCW - and in particular by Hulk Hogan, Gene Okerlund, Jimmy Hart and Mr. T (for Toast, which is what this guy is in the entertainment business). This deal is going to go down as the Fiasco That Finished Turner and Wrestling if they aren't careful. It's funny, as I heard more and more about this deal, it kept becoming sweeter for Hogan with each

iteration. You see, I woke up one morning having a strange dream: Hulk Hogan was working in WCW. Later that day, when Ric Carter called, I told him about my dream. Several days later, he called me back. "You won't believe this, but that dream you had? About Hogan? Well, I just talked to Mike Tenay and..." the rest is history.

So I heard a lot about the deal as it evolved, and it kept getting better for Terry Bollea and worse for WCW. Suddenly he was only in for six months unless he wanted to extend his contract; and he was only going to work a few PPVs instead of a regular schedule.

Still, WCW thinks it's going to recreate 1984.

Here's why they can't:

Reason Number One: It isn't 1984. This attempt to recreate that interest is as fully dumbfounding as anything Ole Anderson ever tried: recreating a past that never really existed for an audience that doesn't really care. You can't recreate Woodstock, the Beatles or even Hogan. Even if he's played by Hulk Hogan.

Reason Number Two: Vince McMahon will screw them. Somehow, some way. Notice how Titan has suddenly started showing golden oldie matches? Like, suddenly, McMahon has all this historical awareness to get over. Right. Or is he looking to run an old Hogan-Ric Flair match from Madison Square Garden as a free special on USA?

Reason Number Three: Remember the Rock & Wrestling Connection? This time, there's barely a wrestling

connection. Two over the hill guys, and the heel is over bigger in the area they're working than the supposedly godlike babyface. Or are Nine Inch Nails and the Butthole Surfers going to show up in Hogan's corner instead of George Forman next time.

Reason Number Four: Mr. T. His presence confirms this is a lame and pathetic attempt to bring back the past.

Reason Number Five: They don't have enough time. WCW has to rush this thing like crazy people. Anyone who has ever watched a month of wrestling knows that the first pay-per-view should have had a tag main event: Hogan and Sting vs. Flair and, say Vader. Then they tease that whenever Hogan gets it, Flair tags out. Then, when it's all over, Hogan can fight Vader after he does Flair. This hasn't happened. Instead, they will give us Hogan vs. Flair with screwjob finishes until it is coming out of our ears. There will be no build up, no drama, just Hulk vs. Flair, Hulk vs. Flair, Hulk vs. Flair...

Reason Number Six: With Hogan in on a potential quickie, his defeat of Flair means they can wrap up WCW and flush it. When the guy they have been pushing as the greatest wrestler who ever lived gets his butt whipped by the steroid/cartoon joke Hogan, who will wind up back with McMahon before this whole dance shuts down, it's Game Over. By the way, do you think Hogan plans on doing a job?

Reason Number Seven: Jimmy Hart. What happened to this guy? Did he or did he not used to be a pretty good stooge? Now he's a perpetual bullspit machine. He was on Carter's Las Vegas radio show recently and I swear he was

sucking up to everybody. He mentioned that Hogan and he are part of a band now and they've cut an album. So I called in and asked: "Jimmy, on the subject of Hogan singing, how do you think the fact he's going to testify against McMahon will affect his future in the business?"

Basically, he gave me the same weasel worded non-answer he gave the kids who asked him what it felt like to be the Hulkster's bud. I am paraphrasing, but the answer went something very much like: "You said it, man. I'm telling you, it's getting weird, man. It's like that O.J. Simpson thing, man! You know? I was with the WWF a long time and it was really great, and now I'm with Hulk Hogan in WCW and that's great."

This guy didn't say a word that meant anything. With Hogan and Mr. T spewing during their interview segments, the once mighty "Mouth of the South" has been rendered largely inoperative. I've known mynah birds who could handle his on-camera gig.

Reason Number Eight: Hulk Hogan.

This guy is done. Over. Check, please! Hello? Hello? Hello? Hulk who? I'm sorry, that number's been disconnected. His soon to be canceled *Thunder in Paradise* series was a shot in the arm in terms of media visibility and personal bucks, but there's no reason to think that he can do the kind of wrestling business he did back when he was fresh and hot and people bought into his trip. He is such an obvious blowhard, such a patent fraud, and finally a rat that only the youngest, most naive child could possibly believe in Hogan and his bogus "Demandments." The new environment of WCW hasn't caused Hogan to re-invent himself. He's doing a pumped-up retread of the same tired schtick he's been selling for a decade to consistently diminishing enthusiasm and audience levels.

I love watching this stiff pump up while the WCW hardcores boo him. Still, he doesn't get it. That's the most amazing thing. Or else he simply doesn't give a bump. If he had only come across as a human being - the way he does when he pushes *Thunder* - his drama might actually translate to the mid-nineties.

Hogan has to learn to modulate. The constant steroid rage is older than dirt. When he starts at "11" there's just nowhere to go, even on a Marshall amp.

Reason Number Nine: It's a different world. Wrestling isn't on a network anymore. It simply doesn't reach as many people as it did in the mid-eighties. It's also old. People are sick of the same diet of bad angles and worse matches. The last few PPVs I watched, I was able to call about 80 percent of the spots and virtually every finish, even before they went into the set-up. The man on the street isn't talking about the Undertaker, or Flair, or Roddy Piper, or even Hulk Hogan. There's more talk about World Cups and Stanley Cups, than there is about any old Hogan-Flair farce. That do is done, homey. Change the channel. *Play Mortal Kombat II*. But enough with the Hogan-Flair already.

It's over guys. While a lot of guys have ripped off Ted Turner's wrestling money over the years, Terry takes the strap.

The Phantom Of The Ring

A Funny Thing Happened While At The *Forum*

Writing for *Wrestling Perspective* can be quite an easy task, given the intelligence of the publication and the fact that I have never been given a strict deadline. Yet there are times when I do have to get something written, usually something I promised to Dave and Paul months ago, and I find myself facing a self-imposed deadline. It is during such

times that I find myself waxing nostalgic for the old days when I had to turn out a column every two weeks. That was when I wrote for *The Wrestling Forum*.

Some of you who know me remember me from those days at the *Forum*. For those who never had the good fortune

to sample its pages, I can only describe the *Forum* as a bi-weekly, freewheeling diatribe on wrestling, founded, edited, and often held together with spit, blood and sheer will by Jon Gallagher.

As a matter of fact, if I were ever to sit down and write an essay about the most unforgettable character I ever met,

Gallagher would be my subject. Jon was definitely one-of-a-kind; a true piece of work in the best sense of the word. He always seemed to be in a constant state of perpetual motion. Jon was never happy with merely one project; rather, it was usually three projects at a time. The irony of this was that this peripatetic outlook would lead to the folding of the *Forum*.

I first became acquainted with Jon and his newsletter during my days at *Wrestling Eye* magazine. Among other duties, I ran the fan club column, wherein I would review and plug newsletters and bulletins sent to me. (This was a wonderful racket which I will expand on later when I write a column about my days, or daze, at the *Eye*.) One day, I received a small, Xeroxed pamphlet which called itself *Wrestling Forum*. I was immediately taken with the fact that the editors misspelled the word "wrestling" on the masthead. Inside, however, was a mixture of writing about wrestling that seemed as if it were written by Jean Shepard and David Letterman. I mean, there was some really good stuff in here. It was an intelligent newsletter, which was in marked contrast to most of the drivel I received each month. As I read each successive issue I began to think that it would not be such a bad idea to expand my horizons and do a Phantom column for the *Forum*. I called Jon, he accepted, and I was added to the staff.

During the first two years of the *Forum*, everything was copacetic. I delivered a regular column and eventually expanded into a wrestling historian, the reason being that I was fascinated with the history of wrestling and the fact that it was an angle no one else was

pursuing. We had a pretty good staff: in addition to Jon and myself, we had Sean Grande, a budding journalist, who was going to Boston College; Jeff Siegel, whose father, Howard, is one hell of a wrestling historian, and a fellow you may know, Bill Kunkel (I wonder whatever became of him?). Everything was going so smoothly that Jon decided to expand his horizons while the proverbial iron was hot. Unfortunately, it was the worst move he could have made.

For some inexplicable reason, Jon decided to form a fan organization. I warned him against it on the grounds that given the recent climate changes in wrestling such as cable and weekly newsletters, fan organizations were obsolete. Also, given his reputation and the reputations of others in the newsletter biz, no promoter would want to host a convention composed of these people. But I couldn't shake Jon of this idea and agreed to become an Under Poobah of some sort in the organization. To my utter surprise, Jon actually got this spruce goose off the ground and actually landed a convention in Memphis.

However, this is where the gravy train derailed. The convention was, to put it mildly, a disaster for Jon. He lost money on the deal; money he didn't really have. There were bad feelings from the Memphis promotion, which mistakenly agreed to host the thing. Jon fell behind in his membership promises, a quarterly newsletter and a birthday card signed by a wrestler. Given all this, Jon's interest in the whole enterprise began to wane. He held a second, and last, convention in Chicago after much bitching on the part of the membership,

who wanted to hold it somewhere else, and on the part of Jon himself, who declared that Chicago was going to be the place because he and his family couldn't afford anything else, and none of the critics were willing to step forward and help. He often decried the lack of cooperation from the membership on almost any issue, especially those issues concerned with money. The members generally acted like a pack of ungrateful freeloaders, expecting Jon to do everything and foot every bill. Let's face reality, \$15 yearly dues only go so far. I told Jon he should have realized that himself. But I never took advantage of Jon. I did not attend either convention. You didn't have to be a weatherman to know which way this wind was blowing.

The failure of the organization made Jon a pariah in the world of wrestling writers. The bulletin suffered as a result because many subscribers were failing to renew. Most of the staff departed, except for yours truly, who didn't know enough to bail out. Though Jon would later add talented writers such as Sean Hendrick, the *Forum*, for all intents and purposes, had had it. What's more, Jon knew it.

Believing that his presence was the cause of the low subscription rate, Jon sold the *Forum* to a group from Chicago. However, their style, or lack of it, only served to alienate the readership that was left. When it was finally agreed that this shift in ownership was a disaster, Jon stepped back into the formal ownership picture. At this point it was like skiing uphill. The newsletter still had a core of loyal readers, but they were not numerous enough to pay the expenses.

The *Forum* breathed its last breath a few months later. Overcome by expenses, Jon merely put it to sleep. I recently spoke with him about life after the *Forum*. He went back to school and received his teaching certification. As for wrestling, he admitted that he had not seen it in over a year. The more we talked, the more I began to realize that, despite the many fine people Jon met through wrestling over the years, he was speaking exactly like a man who had just awoke from a nightmare and was relieved to discover that indeed it was all a dream.

Next Issue...

- Part II Of The Dory Funk Jr. Interview...
- Articles From The Phantom, Bill Kunkel & More...
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